



Guidebook to the School Climate Survey for Staff, 2008–09

**The Safe Schools / Healthy
Students National Evaluation
Team**

PREFACE

GUIDEBOOK PURPOSE

This guidebook provides information about the staff version of the School Climate Survey (SCS), which is being conducted as part of the Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) Initiative National Evaluation. The survey was developed by WestEd, an educational research and development agency, as part of the Healthy Kids Survey data system. It was selected by the National Evaluation Team (NET) because it assesses variables and outcomes that are key to the SS/HS goals. This guidebook contains information needed to ensure that the survey is completed successfully at each participating school. Questions about administration of the survey, sampling plans, and the SS/HS National Evaluation should be directed to SCSquestions@manilaconsulting.net. Questions about accessing the survey or technical problems should be directed to SCSTEchnical@wested.org.

HISTORY OF THE HEALTHY KIDS DATA COLLECTION SYSTEM

Beginning in 1997, the California Department of Education funded WestEd to develop two school-based assessment tools: the Healthy Kids Survey for students and the companion SCS for school staff. In compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, California has required all districts in the State that receive Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities funds to administer the Healthy Kids Surveys biennially to assess student and school needs, monitor progress in addressing those needs, and demonstrate accountability. The Healthy Kids Survey for students is a comprehensive self-report assessment of student risk factors and resilience-enhancing assets. The SCS collects comparable data on staff perceptions of school problems and student behaviors.

The Healthy Kids data collection system is in large part rooted in the recognition that improvements in academic achievement cannot occur without addressing the health and behavioral risks that confront our nation's youth and without establishing environments that support learning and positive youth development. The first step in achieving this goal is obtaining data to guide program development and decisionmaking. The SCS provides key information for both student health/prevention programs and overall school improvement efforts by collecting data on fundamental learning supports and barriers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The SS/HS National Evaluation Team, composed of the MANILA Consulting Group, RMC Research Corporation, and Battelle Centers for Public Health Research and Evaluation, has contracted with WestEd to conduct the survey. Duerr Evaluation Resources and an Expert Advisory Committee assisted in the development of the survey.

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1. OVERVIEW OF THE SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEY

The School Climate Survey (SCS) selected for the Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) Initiative National Evaluation is a short online assessment by school staff that can be completed in under 10 minutes. There is no cost for administering the survey as part of the National Evaluation. The SCS includes key questions related to academic standards, staff-student relationships, the learning environment in the school, and learning supports and barriers. A related goal is to provide more data to advance awareness of the linkages between health and academic achievement.

The SCS gathers information from school staff that will enrich the ability of school districts and grants to: (a) understand the health risk and protective factors that students encounter; and (b) address the impact of substance use and violence on students and schools. The survey contains general climate questions relevant to academic achievement, school connectedness, staff relationships, learning supports, and learning barriers. Exhibit 1 on page 5 outlines the survey content.

Individual schools are not being assessed based on the SCS results. The purpose of the SS/HS National Evaluation is to assess the effectiveness of the SS/HS Initiative as a whole. However, because of the value of the survey data to SS/HS grantees, project directors will have access to the results for their site. Staff responses will remain anonymous and cannot be tied back to the respondent.

This guidebook is intended for the use of the SS/HS project director (or designated grant survey coordinator) for each grant. The NET/WestEd will work with each project director to arrange for survey administration in all participating grant schools. The main responsibilities of the project director are to distribute the survey to participating staff and monitor staff participation.

WHO TAKES THE SURVEY

A sampling design was developed to minimize the survey's burden on school staff while ensuring the representativeness of the sample. The design is based on four school levels or types: elementary, middle, high, and alternative schools. The sample of school staff will be drawn using an equal sampling rate for targeted strata at each site. Alternative schools with fewer than 100 students will not be included in the survey.

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION BASICS

The NET will help you randomly select the appropriate number of staff from your schools. For small schools, the NET may instruct you to survey all staff. Staff will include teachers; administrators; prevention staff, nurses, or health aides; counselors or psychologists; police, resource officers, or safety personnel; paraprofessionals, teacher assistants, or instructional aides; and other certified staff (e.g., librarians).

The following summarizes the basic survey administration procedures that are discussed in more detail in the tasks described in Section 2.

- **Online Administration.** The survey is designed for online administration for convenience and prompt reporting of results. It can be conducted manually using a paper version, if necessary.
- **Administration Period.** The survey will be administered annually. Each grantee is given 3 weeks to complete the survey. Each person must complete his/her survey in one session.
- **Voluntary Staff Participation.** A request to participate should be distributed to designated staff. Staff participation must be **voluntary**. No one is required to take the survey.
- **Anonymity and Confidentiality.** The survey results are anonymous and confidential. There is no way to identify an individual's answers to the questions because: (a) a single survey login and password is used for everyone at a school; and (b) only aggregated results are available to grantees. NET researchers analyzing the aggregated SCS database (the results from all grantees) will maintain strict data confidentiality.
- **Survey Costs.** There are no costs for the administration of the survey when it occurs as part of the SS/HS National Evaluation.
- **California Grantees.** Some California grantees may have already scheduled or will be conducting the State-required biennial administration of the Healthy Kids SCS for staff in the 2008–09 school year. Because the NET will be sampling staff from targeted schools, California grantees will still be required to administer the SS/HS version of the SCS. However, California grantees that plan to administer the Healthy Kids SCS annually in the same semester throughout the SS/HS grant period should e-mail SCSquestions@manilaconsulting.net, and a NET representative will work with them to determine next steps.

REPORTS

The project director will have online access to the survey results. To preserve anonymity, results will be presented in tables that combine answers by school type (i.e., elementary, middle, high, and alternative schools).

ASSISTANCE

To assist the project director in planning and implementing the survey, assistance is available. Questions about administration of the survey, sampling plans, and the National Evaluation should be directed to SCSquestions@manilaconsulting.net. Questions about accessing the survey or technical problems should be directed to SCSTEchnical@wested.org.

2. PLANNING AND CONDUCTING THE SURVEY

TASK 1. ➡ MAKE ADMINISTRATION ARRANGEMENTS

The SCS is administered online to simplify planning and logistics for grantees. Each participant only needs to go to the Web site as instructed and log in. All the project director needs to do is make sure the instructions are distributed and encourage a high rate of participation. School staff can take the survey from any computer, anywhere, at any convenient time during the 3-week survey window.

Printed Survey Administration Option

If a large proportion of staff within a grant does not have convenient access to computers, you may elect to use a printed version of the survey. Upon request, you will be provided a master print version of the survey for photocopying and distribution. You will be responsible for collecting the completed surveys and sending them to the NET, which will then enter the data into the online system for you. If you would like to choose this method, contact Mike Van Horn at 571-633-9797, ext. 205, or mvanhorn@manilaconsulting.net.

Send the surveys to:

Mike Van Horn
MANILA Consulting Group, Inc.
6707 Old Dominion Drive, Suite 315
McLean, VA 22101
Tel.: 571-633-9797, ext. 205

Please use a delivery service that has the ability to track packages, such as Federal Express, United Parcel Service, or United States Postal Service Priority Mail.

TASK 2. ➡ DISTRIBUTE SURVEY MATERIALS

The NET/WestEd will send the survey materials via e-mail to each project director. The materials will include instructions and login information for each school. Exhibit 2 on page 6 shows what the instructions will look like. Project directors should distribute the instructions to each participating staff member at each school site (e.g., by e-mailing them or printing them to distribute at staff meetings or put in staff mailboxes).

Participating staff should follow the instructions and fill out the survey online, from any computer. The survey must be completed in one session, at the end of which results are submitted electronically. Exhibit 3 on page 8 provides information to help troubleshoot common survey issues.

TASK 3. ➡ MONITOR PARTICIPATION

A high level of participation should be encouraged to ensure that your data are representative and valid. However, staff participation is voluntary. Staff who do not wish to participate must not be required to do so. No action should be taken that could be interpreted as coercive or punitive for not participating. If a staff person informs you that he or she does not wish to participate, please select another staff person using your sampling plan.

Project directors can monitor staff participation rates online in “real time” for each school (i.e., you will view a current count of how many surveys have been completed). Closely monitor participation to ensure that enough staff are completing the survey to result in useful data. **If you need to extend the 3-week survey period, contact Mike Van Horn at 571-633-9797, ext. 205, or mvanhorn@manilaconsulting.net.**

TASK 4. ➡ REVIEW RESULTS

Grant results will be available via the same Web site where you view your response rates. Project directors can view data for all schools combined in the grant (all schools) and by school type (elementary, middle, high, alternative). Simply click on the link for the desired report type. Exhibit 4 on page 9 provides an example of an “all schools” report.

Exhibit 1. Survey Content Outline

Topic	Variables
Respondent Background	Role in school (teacher, administrator, etc.) Years worked at school Race/ethnicity
Substance Use	Degree to which alcohol/tobacco/drug use pose a problem at school
School Safety and Violence	Perceived safety of students and staff Degree to which there is a problem at school from: bullying, physical fighting, racial/ethnic conflict, lack of respect of staff, gang-related activity, weapons, vandalism, and theft
Equity Issues	Degree to which racial/ethnic conflict poses a problem at school Appreciation of student diversity and respect
Discipline	Degree to which disruptive student behavior and truancy pose a problem How many students are well-behaved Fair and effective handling of discipline problems
School Rules and Policies	Communication of consequences for breaking school rules Nature and consistency of rule enforcement (zero tolerance vs. case-by-case)
Health and Prevention	Provision of healthy food choices Degree to which students are healthy and physically fit Degree to which student depression/mental health pose a problem at school Adequacy of counseling/support and health services for students
Learning/Working Environment	Staff responsibility for improving the school Staff treatment of, feelings toward, and fairness to students Whether the school is a supportive place to learn and work School standards and promotion of academic success Staff relationships and support Degree to which staff have caring relationships, high expectations, and opportunities for meaningful participation with students Student participation in class activities and rule-making How many students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arrive at school alert and rested - Are motivated to learn - Are involved in extracurricular activities or enrichment opportunities
Parent Involvement	Parent involvement in school events and activities

Exhibit 2. Master Letter: Survey Instructions for Staff

INSTRUCTIONS

<<INSERT SCHOOL NAME>>

Your school would appreciate your completing a short online staff School Climate Survey (SCS) within the next 3 weeks to support the work of its federally funded Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) grant. The survey is part of the National Evaluation of these grants. **Your participation is voluntary, but it is very important for your school.**

- The information you provide will help improve the district's SS/HS grant and guide its efforts to improve student achievement and the school climate, enhance learning supports, promote safety, and reduce health risks that stand as barriers to learning.
- **Your answers to the survey questions are completely anonymous and confidential.** This survey provides an opportunity for you to communicate anonymously in a neutral context your perceptions about the learning environment at the school, the challenges you experience, and your concerns about the school and student behavior.
- Neither your school nor district are being rated or evaluated based on the results. The National Evaluation is examining the effects of the SS/HS Initiative as a whole.

What information does the survey collect? The main focus of the survey is to assess school staff perceptions of the learning environment in the following areas:

- Academic norms, standards, and priorities
- The working environment in the school
- Learning supports and barriers
- Staff-student relationships and staff supportive relationships
- Student connectedness to the school
- The problems posed by student risk behaviors (substance use, violence, and truancy)
- Staff and student safety
- Nature, communication, and enforcement of school rules/policies
- Availability of health and counseling services

Exhibit 2. Survey Instructions (Continued)

**You will have access to this online survey for 3 WEEKS beginning
February 16, 2009.**

Access the login page for the survey using the following URL: www.wested.org/sshs

Use the following login and password (all lowercase letters) and click the Login button:

Login: **«login»**

Password: **«password»**

Troubleshooting

If you are having trouble taking the survey, please try these solutions:

- Make sure that your Web browser has cookies enabled. You may also need to clear the cookies in your Web browser.
- Make sure that you have entered only lowercase letters for the password.
- Make sure that you are not trying to take the survey prior to the start date listed above or later than 3 weeks after it.
- If you are still having problems taking the survey, contact SCSTechnical@wested.org.

Thank you for taking this important survey!

Exhibit 3. Troubleshooting the Online Survey

Problem:

"I entered the Web address, www.wested.org/climate, but I don't see the login page."

Solution:

- Restart your browser. You'll need to quit the program entirely and restart it (don't just close or hide the screen).
 - Clear or empty the cache. By clearing the cache, your computer will "forget" the incorrect page. The empty cache feature can usually be located in the main menu or under Tools, Options, or Privacy.
 - Clear the cookies in your Web browser. Cookies may be storing a previous user's login information. You should be able to find this feature under Preferences, Security, or Privacy. If you can't, use your browser's Help menu or ask your local computer expert for help.
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Problem:

"I have reached the login page, but my login/password isn't working."

Solution:

- Make sure you have entered only lowercase letters for the password.
 - Make sure you are not trying to take the survey prior to the start date provided, or later than 3 weeks after it.
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Problem:

"I entered my login/password, but the system keeps loading a different login/password."

Solution:

- Restart your browser. You'll need to quit the program entirely and restart it (don't just close or hide the screen).
- Clear or empty the cache. By clearing the cache, your computer will "forget" the incorrect page. The empty cache feature can usually be located in the main menu or under Tools, Options, or Privacy.
- Clear the cookies in your Web browser. Cookies may be storing a previous user's login information. You should be able to find this feature under Preferences, Security, or Privacy. If you can't, use your browser's Help menu or ask your local computer expert for help.

Exhibit 4. Sample Page From Online Report

